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# Shallow Roots: An Analysis of Filipino Immigrant Labor in Seattle from 1920-1940

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**Shallow Roots: An Analysis of Filipino Immigrant Labor in Seattle from 1920-1940**

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of History

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

The Honors Program

of

Butler University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Krista Baylon Sorenson

April 22, 2011

“Why was America so kind and yet so cruel? Was there no way to simplify things in this continent so that suffering would be minimized? Was there not common denominator on which we could all meet? I was angry and confused and wondered if I would ever understand this paradox?”<sup>1</sup>

“It was a planless life, hopeless, and without direction. I was merely living from day to day: *yesterday* seemed long ago and *tomorrow* was too far away. It was *today* that I lived for aimlessly, this hour-this moment.”<sup>2</sup>

-Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*

## Introduction

Carlos Bulosan was a Filipino immigrant living in the United States beginning in the 1930s. His experiences, typical of many of the many migratory laborers at this time, are recorded in his semi-autobiographical work, *America is in the Heart: A Personal History*. What Bulosan and others like him were looking for in the United States was a place to earn a decent living so that they might share the wealth when they returned to the Philippines. They expected to be welcomed by and fit in with white Americans. Instead they encountered racism, discrimination, and exploitation all of which resulted in tense relations between white America and Filipino immigrants. What should have been a time for Filipinos to establish deep roots in the fabric of American culture and society turned into a period of time where Filipinos suffered. They moved from place to place establishing very few permanent ties and only planted shallow roots.

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<sup>1</sup> Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart: A Personal History*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1941) 147.

<sup>2</sup> Bulosan, 169.

This research looks to understand the disparity between Filipinos and their Asian American counterparts in cultural presence within the United States, especially given the Filipinos large numbers as immigrants to the United States. According to the 2000 United States Census, there were a little over 10 million who self identify solely as Asians. Of these 10 million, about 1,850,000 were Filipinos. This is the second largest Asian immigrant group. Their numbers are only exceeded by the Chinese. Filipinos themselves exceed other Asian groups such as Japanese, Koreans and Asian Indians.<sup>3</sup> Historically, while the large majority of Filipinos immigrants settled in Hawaii, sizable groups of Filipino immigrants have confined themselves to the West Coast. California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska have all seen large numbers of Filipinos. During the height of their immigration to the United States in the 1920s and 1930s there were approximately 45,000 Filipinos residing on the mainland, with over 63,000 Filipinos in Hawaii.<sup>4</sup> This research focuses on the collective experience of Filipino laborers in Seattle between 1920 and 1940. I argue that Filipino immigrants and Filipino culture is not visible to white America because the second wave of Filipino labor immigrants was unable to plant more than shallow roots in American society. What roots the Filipinos did plant were more Americanized than ethnically Filipino limiting their cultural presence in the United States today.

In the past thirty years there has been a greater focus on the collective Asian American history by scholars. Sucheng Chan and Gary Y. Okihiro have looked at the major themes in Asian American experiences and interactions. More specifically Chan

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "U.S. Summery 2000: Census Profile 2000," July 2002, <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>

<sup>4</sup> James A. Tyner, "Filipinos: The Invisible Ethnic Community" in *Contemporary Ethnic Geographies in America* edited by Ines M. Miyares and Christopher A. Airries (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007) 254.

and Okihiro have debated the impact of economics as a driving force for Asian immigration.<sup>5</sup> There is a smaller group of scholars that looked more closely at the relationship between the United States and the Philippines and some of this focus is on the imperial interactions between America and the Philippines. This includes the work of Warwick Anderson and his look at Americanization in the Philippines through medicalization, where Anderson argues that the United States confronted their own fears of effeminacy at home and abroad through the use of science and medicine in the Philippines.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, much has been done in the area of Filipinos and miscegenation movements in the United States. Contributions by Vincente L. Rafael, Peggy Pascoe, and Brett H. Melendy have shown that Filipinos have faced heavy persecution for the color of their skin and their interest in white American women.<sup>7</sup> Finally, there has been an upswing in the scholarship pertaining to second wave of Filipino immigrants, more commonly known as *manongs*. Much of the focus has been on the collective experiences of the *manongs* with a more specific focus on the Filipinos in California. The works of Ronald Takaki, Mae M. Ngai, and Fred and Dorothy Cordova have shown how Filipino immigrants have filled a contentious space in the consciousness of white America as objects of attention and objects to be forgotten.<sup>8</sup> This scholarship

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<sup>5</sup> Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991). And Gary Y. Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Vincente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000). And Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). And Melendy, Brett H. "California's Discrimination Against Filipinos, 1927-1935," edited by Roger Daniels and Spencer Olin, Jr. *Racism in California: A Reader in the History of Oppression* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972): 141-151.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald Takaki, *In the Heart of Filipino America: Immigrants from the Pacific Isles*, Adapted by Rebecca Stefoff with Carol Takaki (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea Book Publishers, 1995). And Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton

has provided the groundwork to my assertion that single Filipino men looking for quick money did not see the need to settle in one location. By the time they did begin to settle, anti-imperialist thought, racism, and miscegenation made it harder for these men to develop deep ethnic roots in American culture and society.

Following the example of Dorothy Fujita-Rony who shifted the focus away from California and looked at the impact of Filipinos in the canneries and the labor unions of Seattle,<sup>9</sup> my research focuses on the second wave laborers' experiences in Seattle for a few reasons. First, King Street in Seattle was the second largest gathering point outside of California for Filipino laborers in the continental United States. After arriving at Pier 37 or Pier 52 Filipinos were sent in taxis up the hill to King Street, mirroring the same routine that happened in California as Filipinos disembarked and hopped in taxis or trains to Stockton. Secondly, Seattle was emerging as a major port in the continental United States. More ships were bringing goods to Seattle from different parts of the world. Seattle had also cornered the market for trade in Alaska early in its history. This meant that Seattle supplied the goods, money and labor sent up to Alaska in exchange for the products of Alaska's canneries. Laborers were as likely to work as *Alaskeros* and cannery workers as they were to work as farm laborers. They were also as likely to be recruited in the Philippines to be *Alaskeros* as they were to be farm laborers. All they had to do was get themselves to King Street in Seattle. Working in the canneries was also a stable position for the entire off season in agriculture. This meant that Filipinos who came to Seattle were provided with a limited but stable income. Additionally, in Seattle,

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University Press, 2004). And Fred Cordova, *Filipinos, Forgotten Asian Americans, a Pictorial Essay, 1763-circa-1963* (Demonstration Project for Asian Americans, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

there were more concentrated attempts at unionizing and settlement at the beginnings of World War II.

For these reasons, if Filipinos were going to make their mark on American culture and society, there is a good chance it could be done in Seattle. By World War II Filipinos in Seattle had spread themselves out into the districts of Pioneer Square, the Central District, Beacon Hill, Chinatown/International District and the Central Area. Clearly, Filipinos in Seattle had covered a large area spatially, but this did not translate quite as well culturally. Laborers had settled down in these areas but they were still limited numbers of Filipino women in the United States. Additionally, while there was no explicit miscegenation laws in Washington, Filipinos were not marrying white women. Instead they unionized and continued travelling back and forth between Seattle and Alaska.

The focus on second wave Filipino immigrants, or *manongs*, is motivated by the observation that it is often the laboring class of immigrants that impact the fabric of American culture. Immigrant laborers' relegation to ghettos, reliance on native culture in a strange land, and concentrated numbers as laborers often results in immigrants influencing American culture, even as white American society attempts to make them assimilate to an All-American way of life. Thus, around the nation there are Chinatowns, Little Italys, Irish Pubs, Mexican Restaurants as well as many other ethnic areas and businesses that are remnants from each immigrant groups past as the laboring poor in the United States. Despite this phenomenon, Filipino labor immigrants have not contributed to and influenced American culture. There are not Little Manilas, there are few if any Filipino restaurants or grocery stores, and there do not appear to be any festivals

singularly celebrating Filipinos as there are for German, Italian, Irish and Mexican communities. As a result, my focus on the *manongs* will be slightly different from much of the scholarship already available which covers their itinerant lifestyles and use these reasons to focus on the shallow impact Filipino laborers had on American culture. The use of these sources is not to just add to the wealth of knowledge being written on the laboring generation of Filipino immigrants. It is meant to answer the question of why. Why did Filipino laborers not succeed in culturally impacting American society when other similar immigrant labor groups did? My answer is that the *manongs*' expectations and early action did not mesh with their reality in the United States. By the time they attempted to change this, American sentiment had turned against the *manongs* and the public's attention had moved elsewhere.

To demonstrate this conclusion I begin with a look at the United States' imperialism and its relationship to the Philippines, which will result in an analysis of its impact on the four stages of Filipino immigration to the United States, followed by a more particular look at the second wave of immigration. Next, I will study the life led by Filipino labor immigrants in Seattle during the 1920s and 1930s, including the histories of three individuals. I will also provide information on the reception that Filipinos experienced between 1920 and 1940. This thesis will conclude by moving away from Seattle and applying the information from this more narrow location into a broader assessment of why Filipinos faded into the American background after World War II. After the war, the impact of war brides, families and communities could have produced an impactful Filipino culture, but instead Filipinos became "model immigrants" leaving no lasting impression on American culture.



## **United States Imperialism and Its Relation to the Philippines**

In the years leading up to the Spanish American War the United States was undergoing a large amount of change. It was leaving behind the large internal conflicts that plagued their initial years and was moving to a time of unification and formation of nationhood. Central to this formation was a reaffirmation of what it meant to be an American. The whole of the Progressive Era had been full of these types of affirmations. Every aspect of American life was under scrutiny as to whether it actually fit American's perceptions of themselves. Race, sex, science, and religion were all areas of the American life that were examined. What emerged was a picture of America in which to be an American meant that an individual was white, who had fought on the right side of the Civil War, and a had willingness for adventure.

Additionally, the late nineteenth century saw the United States growing into its role as leading first world power. Finished with the process of creating a new nation, and finished with solely focusing on the problems and resolutions of the Civil War, the leaders of the country were looking abroad for ways to further their standing among alongside the major powerhouses of Great Britain, Germany, Russia, and others. Furthermore, business interests and capitalism pushed for more markets to conquer and resources to obtain. Finally, the 1890 census and Fredrick Jackson Turner's thesis on the frontier had brought to the attention of the public that the frontier was closed, that which made America different from Europe was no longer available to its population. The result of these major factors meant that the America government, spurred on by business, could create rhetoric for imperialism which played on the idea of improving the political strength of the nation, improving economic resources, and finding that new frontier to

explore. Imperialism was beginning to look and sound like a good idea. Tradition and the American Way could not be ignored.

Voices of dissent did emerge. There was a large group of people who feared appearing and being inferior to the people they were attempting to civilize. This played into the debate about whether white masculine America was suffering from “over-civilized effeminacy” or if they could emulate Theodore Roosevelt and live a “strenuous life.”<sup>10</sup> Beyond this fear of effeminacy and inferiority, some Americans began to question whether it was all right for a country which had once been colonized and fought for their liberty to colonize and suppress a nationalist movement. Rebecca Edwards states, “Both Filipino and American critics of war found it ironic when a U.S. commander in Manila seized copies of the U.S. Declaration of Independence that had been translated into Spanish, calling it an ‘incendiary document.’”<sup>11</sup> Likewise William Jennings Bryan in a speech to the Indianapolis Democratic Convention claimed, “Some argue that American rule in the Philippine Islands will result in the better education of Filipinos. Be not deceived...we dare not educate them, lest they learn to read the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States and mock us for our inconsistency.”<sup>12</sup> Thus Imperialists were facing a growing number of individuals who were experiencing a crisis of conscience as well as a crisis of consciousness. They saw the United States’ occupation of the Philippines as an offense against the nation’s history. They could not reconcile being a master over a group of people when they had just fought

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<sup>10</sup> Gail Bederman, “Theodore Roosevelt and The Strenuous Life” in *Major Problems in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, ed. Leon Fink (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001):294.

<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in the “Gilded Age” 1865-1905*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 243.

<sup>12</sup> William Jennings Bryan, “William Jennings Bryan Opposes U.S. Occupation of the Philippines, 1900” in *Major Problems in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, ed. Leon Fink (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001): 267-268.

a war in part to end slavery and all that went with it. Anti-Expansionists and Anti-Imperialists were hard at work trying to end the United States' involvement abroad even as Theodore Roosevelt was decrying them as "decadent, effeminate and enemies of civilization."<sup>13</sup>

Despite this dissent, politics and commerce became the cornerstones of the expansionist or imperial movement in the United States. Internally politicians were worried about a growing tide of anger and socialism by the masses. Edwards explains that leaders wanted to "secure overseas markets for American products, ensuring jobs and prosperity to ease domestic distress...creating favorable conditions for commerce-but at gunpoint if necessary."<sup>14</sup> An additional benefit would be that this movement, while helping internal affairs, would also assist in the United States involvement in the competition over foreign markets occurring between England, Germany, Russia and France. This establishment on the world stage would mean that other nations would begin to turn to the United States for help, not the other way around.

Edwards states that leaders explained American occupation in the Philippines as "Our only safeguard for our trade interests in the East" and that they also explained imperialism by appealing "to the same racial thinking so evident in domestic affairs."<sup>15</sup> As a result local rebel leaders in newly colonized areas were not seen to be civilized enough to successfully lead their nations into democratic leadership. Additional benefits would be that the United States now had a foothold into economic foreign markets previously closed to them. Therefore, the acquisition of these locations was not enough to prove the might of American resources, going to these places and educating the

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<sup>13</sup> Bederman, 290.

<sup>14</sup> Edwards, 237.

<sup>15</sup> Edwards, 239.

inferior peoples would need to happen in order to fully prove American worth and open even more markets.

This picture of imperialism, however, put new immigrants and freed blacks in a bit of a bind. First of all, these groups did not have an established and mainstream history in the United States. They were relegated to the margins and struggled to become American. The United States has always looked for cheap labor. Moving from indentured servitude to slavery to immigrant labor, this work categorically involved people from the minorities doing the jobs that no one else wanted for the benefit of predominately rich white business owners. As a trade off for their labor, immigrants have often gained a foothold in American society that has translated to permanent presence in the United States and its culture. As a result, new immigrants and freed blacks followed Americanization and assimilation programs. Or they attempted to prove that a whole race could be uplifted by hard work or by the talented few. They also moved west and into the frontier to gain a new beginning and a hope to emerge at the top as other ethnic groups had before them.

African Americans, Germans, Irish, Italians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and Hispanics have started or gone through this process of assimilation and influence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, these groups only achieved a small measure of success for their attempts. Until that time when they reached success, immigrants and African Americans had to work on the margins and wait for their time to come. While they were waiting, white leaders and major business owners, already comfortably established, looked abroad to launch the United States as a major player in

world politics and commerce. Not as obvious of a motivation, these white leaders were also looking for a new source of cheap labor for inside the United States.

American presence in places like the Philippines would open up a whole new pool of laborers that could be a source of competition for these marginalized groups already in the United States. After the establishment of a U. S. presence in the Philippines, and suppression of Filipino nationalist fervor during the Philippine-American War during 1899, Americans and their businesses began recruiting Filipinos to come to the United States for work. There, these recruitment agents promised, Filipinos would earn large amounts of money and become rich. In introducing Carlos Bulosan's book, *America is in the Heart*, Carey McWilliams claims, "It [the book] reflects the collective life experience of thousands of Filipino immigrants who were attracted to the this country by its legendary promises of a better life or who were recruited for employment here."<sup>16</sup> The advantage for these recruitment agents was that Filipinos, as colonial subjects had status as United States nationals. This status exempted the Filipinos from any exclusionary acts that the United States government had established during the Progressive Era. The Chinese and the Japanese already had restrictive quotas on their immigration into the United States. Filipinos were not under any similar quotas. As a result, Filipinos could come to the United States, fulfilling their dreams and expectations, while also fulfilling the dreams and expectations of politicians and white business owners.

The success of the politicians and white business owners in establishing an imperial rhetoric, defeating the dissent of Anti-Imperialists and nationalism in the Philippines, and ignoring the voice of the marginalized already in the United States meant

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<sup>16</sup> Carey McWilliams, "Introduction" in *America is in the Heart: A Personal History* by Carlos Bulosan,, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1941): vii.

that by 1900 America had expanded its interests and its influence. In return, the United States received colonies, raw materials, and stepping points to other markets of commerce. Additionally, the United States received responsibility of a group of people. To fulfill that responsibility white America attempted to improve the Philippines internally, but they also took advantage of the Filipino's status as nationals and promised them jobs in the United States and a better life creating waves of Filipino immigrants to the United States.

This history suggests that Filipinos, who entered the United States with high expectations, had unexpected adversaries. Other marginalized groups would compete with the *manongs* for jobs or to get their money because these groups were trying to get ahead just as the Filipinos were. The other group, white Americans, were really only interested in the Filipinos for their labor. Filipinos had high expectations. What they did not realize was that they would not be white America's "little brown brother" in the United States as they were in the Philippines. Thus imperialism created a situation where people with different agendas were all put together, while only one group, white Americans, held all the power.

### **The Waves of Filipino Labor**

Following their colonization there was an influx of immigration by the Filipinos into the United States. This Filipino immigration can be divided up into four distinct stages or waves. The first wave lasts 1903-1920 with the advent of *pensionados* or students. The second wave occurred 1920-1940 and contained mainly the migrant labor force along the west coast. Immigration was halted during World War II but picked up

with a third wave 1946-1965 which included mostly male white collar professionals, but also included some war brides. Since 1965 to the present the United States has been subject to a fourth and seemingly final wave predominately of women, but including all sorts of individuals.

The first wave of Filipino immigrants consisted of *pensionados*, students intent on studying and returning back to the Philippines with a Western knowledge that would help them run their country. The Filipinos were like other Asian immigrant groups in that they sent students as the first members of immigration. Gary Y. Okihiro points out that this phenomenon was also the first step for other Asian group's immigration. The Chinese students came first in 1847, while the Japanese students came in 1866.<sup>17</sup> Due to both their forceful opening to the West and self interest the Chinese and Japanese were looking for a means to modernize and take back control of their countries from Western imperial influences. The key to this modernization was through the education and westernization of the elites who governed the nation. Sending leaders to places like Germany, England, and the United States gave Asian elites an education in Western thought, practice and customs. Thus when they returned to their homelands these leaders were better equipped to interact with the imperial forces that thought they were civilizing the nation.

Like the Chinese and Japanese, the Filipinos sent off their leaders and upper class citizens to the United States with the help of the *pensionado* program. Harry H. L. Kitano and Roger Daniels explain that *pensionados* were picked to come to the United States for an education. Additionally, while the program only lasted from 1903-1910,

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<sup>17</sup> Gary Y. Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

thousands more came to the United States for an education so that between 1910 and 1938 it is approximated that some 14,000 Filipinos had enrolled in American educational institutions.<sup>18</sup> And while Filipinos had been Spain's imperial subjects for the past five hundred years, it was only with the emergence of a new national identity, the presence of the United States and their attempts at modernization that Filipinos started going abroad for educational purposes. Additionally, like the Chinese and Japanese the *pensionados* were not coming to the United States to stay. They were here for an education. This education they could bring back to the Philippines as proof to Americans that when they were finally granted independence they were ready and able to govern themselves "assum[ing] positions as political, social, and economic leaders."<sup>19</sup> However, not all of these students were able to succeed. And many had to turn to labor jobs which kept young, single men in the United States longer than expected to try and obtain the resources and knowledge they had envisioned before returning to the Philippines.

By the close of the 1910s the *pensionados* were not the only group immigrating to the United States. The trends in Asian immigration show that labor immigrants come after student immigrants. Filipinos follow this trend. As a result, *pensionados* were being followed by a second wave of immigrants, the laborers known as *manongs*. While the *pensionados* were not the only immigrants to come to the United States between 1900 and 1920, they made up the largest portion during this time. Some of the laborers that arrived prior to 1920 consisted of students who could no longer afford an education in the United States. Others were actual laborers who came over as the earliest *manongs*, looking for better work than they could receive in the Philippines. The 1920s, however,

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<sup>18</sup> Harry H. L. Kitano and Roger Daniels. "The Filipinos" in *Asian American: Emerging Minorities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1995): 85.

<sup>19</sup> Tyner, 252.



became the starting point of large numbers of laboring immigrants. Thus, the 1920s marks the beginning of the second wave of immigration by Filipinos to the United States.

The *manongs* of the second wave consisted of the typical members of a laboring work force. These were mainly men, young and unmarried, lured to the United States by recruiters, family members and friends who promised better jobs than anything available to the men in the Philippines. These claims were backed by other Asian immigrant groups from the work force and the United States leaving space for Filipinos. In the Philippines the *manongs* mainly occupied the lowest economic strata, working in the fields, as servants, or other poor laborers. By going to the United States the hope for many of these laborers was that they would come to America, work for a few years, earn a large enough fortune to return to the Philippines better equipped financially to help out their families. Sent over as contract laborers, the *manongs* arrived in differing parts of California such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, Portland, Oregon or Seattle, Washington. Here they were swept up by friends, family or con men and sent off to work the fields and canneries and began their migratory lifestyles.

By the late 1930s the majority of *manongs* had come over to the United States. Instead of getting rich and returning to the Philippines, the *manongs* continued to work as itinerant laborers. Despite their disappointment, *manongs* stayed because of pride and the shame of not succeeding, thus disappointing their families in the Philippines. At the beginning of World War II, some of these individuals were beginning to find ways to settle into the United States and began forming workers unions, and more permanent communities. A larger group of *manongs*, throughout the war and after, continued to labor and migrate. These two groups, however, still consisted predominately of single

men. The smaller numbers of Filipinos with wives and families did make up small communities. But these communities in no way reached the size of other ethnic ghettos already established by Chinese and Japanese in Seattle, or as Germans, Italians and Mexicans had established in other cities. In fact, many of these small Filipino communities were established and swallowed up in the larger Chinatowns and International districts. The result was that while Filipinos might have now been gathering between 1935 and 1940, they were not doing it separately from other immigrant groups, especially other Asians. Additionally, laboring *manongs* were no longer the center of attention and American consciousness.

The new group of Filipinos to hold this position went to the third wave of immigrants who arrived in America between 1946 and 1965. This group consisted mainly of white collar professionals, whose education and job status made it easier for Filipinos to fit into the American way of life and began the tradition of relegating Filipinos to the status of model immigrants. A mix of Filipino nationalism, American education, and experience from World War II gave these individuals more opportunities to fit into the United States as Americanized citizens. More likely to be from a wider range of backgrounds than just the working poor, these individuals had significant backgrounds in education and enough money to support themselves as they pursued further education in the United States for white collar professions. These individuals also started to settle in a wider range of places in the United States. No longer were Filipino immigrants settling predominately in Hawaii and along the West coast. Now they could be found throughout the country. Chicago, Illinois, St. Louis, Missouri, New York, New

Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia all became larger centers of Filipino communities.<sup>20</sup> This meant that the small communities finally being established by the *manongs* were not being reinforced by newer, more prosperous Filipino immigrants. The roots of Filipino identity might have been more established, but they were still shallow and had not spread very far.

The third wave of immigrants, however, had to contend with immigration laws and quotas that severely slowed down their immigration. No longer enjoying the status of an American colony, Filipinos had to come to the United States like any other ethnic group. With only one hundred spots technically available to them through the McCarran–Walter Act, Filipino immigration slowed. Despite these quotas between 1953 and 1965, “the Immigration and Naturalization Service recorded 32,201 Filipino immigrants. In addition, even larger numbers of nonimmigrants – tourists, businesspeople, students – were admitted, and many of these became permanent additions to the American population.”<sup>21</sup> So while immigration for Filipinos slowed in the post-war years it was admitting individuals who would fill a more specific labor market – the white collar labor market – in more diverse locations. The slow but steady immigration of Filipinos transformed again in 1965 when the United States changed their immigration policy with the Immigration Act of 1965. This act not only reopened major immigration by Filipinos to the United States it also started a new wave of immigration.

The fourth and final wave of immigrants comes mainly after 1965. In many ways these immigrants are a continuation of the third wave, but with larger numbers of women working in a range of blue collar to white collar positions. There is no longer a clearly

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<sup>20</sup> Tyner, 259.

<sup>21</sup> Kitano, 90.

defined area type of immigrant to the United States with this fourth wave. More of the Philippine's economics and politics had lead many to seek jobs globally outside of the Philippines. The Marcos regime in particular prompted a surge in immigration for Filipinos. Thus the fourth wave of immigrants includes both the poor laborers who need to go anywhere else for a chance of a semi decent income. It also includes the educated white collar workers who are looking for jobs as doctors, nurses, and businessmen.

What is clear is that there are greater numbers of women in this immigration pattern. Prior to 1965 there had been some immigration of women with the *manongs*, as well as an upswing of war brides during and after World War II, but 1965 greater numbers of women are seen immigrating to the United States. James Tyner explains, "During the 1960s, two-thirds of all Filipino immigrants to the United States were women. This reflected the changing structural conditions in both the United States and the Philippines."<sup>22</sup> Feminism and Civil Rights movements in the United States mixed with changes to the health care structures in the United States and the Philippines created an atmosphere in which Filipino women could occupy a diversity of spaces. Many are nurses, but there also large numbers of academics and domestic servants.

With the wide variety of Filipinos immigrants coming to the United States at a steady pace, this fourth wave appears to be the final wave of Filipino immigration. However, the second waves of *manongs* Filipino immigrants have not been at the forefront of the American consciousness. Instead, later waves occupy a space of friendly immigrants who fit well into American society and appear to be model immigrants, who accept and display an American culture more than their own. The United States past with the Philippines might not be wholly forgotten, but the presence and impact of large

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<sup>22</sup> Tyner, 256.

numbers of Filipino immigrants have. The second wave of Filipino laborers did establish early an independent ghetto. By the time they got around to doing so new waves of Filipinos did not join them. Instead the third and fourth waves with their new white collar jobs move out to the suburbs across the nation. This left the remaining second wave behind.

### **A Look at Immigration and Filipino Experiences as Labor Immigrants**

White America's prejudice and self interest had severely limited their sources of cheap labor along the West Coast. Since the passage of laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, and the Immigration Act of 1917, business owners in the western parts of the United States had difficulty in finding cheap labor. No longer was it easy for Chinese and Japanese immigrants to enter into the United States and work for them. In a response to the growing number of Chinese living and working in the West, and their growing success beyond the world of field labor, the United States resorted to reactionary measures, and curtailed the Chinese's entrance to the United States. The act shows that this action was meant to bar the Chinese from the United States and it left their growth within the country stagnant with little chance of growth and assimilation in the United States. Meanwhile, the Japanese who had replaced Chinese in America's Western labor force began to experience the same prejudice as the Chinese had previously. The resulting Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 effectively did the same thing to the Japanese that had happened to the Chinese twenty five years earlier. Further Anti-Asian sentiment arose with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1917. This act not only curtailed the entrance of all illiterate, criminal, anarchist, and more

immigrants from every country, but it specifically worked against Asians in that it held a clause which contained an “Asiatic Barred Zone.” This zone excluded all Asians and Pacific Islanders from entering the United States.

Clearly the white Americans were set to exclude all those that they thought would be a threat to their own self interest. However, these acts also hindered white America’s source of cheap labor, which could be found in immigrants. As a result, early on in their immigration to the United States, the second wave of Filipinos fulfilled white America’s desire for laborers. As explained, being colonial subjects of the United States meant that Filipinos enjoyed the status of being U.S. nationals. As nationals Filipinos were exempt from prior immigration laws which excluded other Asians from entering the United States. They occupied a state citizenship which was not wholly alien but was not wholly citizen, keeping them in a legal grey area which could work well for business owner and government officials and gave Filipino immigrants an easier time to enter the United States to work. The result was they had a better chance of being employed as laborers on the West Coast, where employers were looking for cheap labor.

In the west where groups such as the Chinese or Japanese saw exclusion from the United States and Mexican immigration was mostly ignored by the government, Filipino labor became a desired commodity for white business owners. As Ngai explains, “The mechanization of agriculture in the 1920s, which accelerated existing trends toward large scale production and land consolidation, began to drive small farmers from the land.” This meant that “commercial agriculture burgeoned, particularly in California and Texas” and left owners in need of workers.<sup>23</sup> In Seattle and other parts of the Northwest,

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<sup>23</sup> Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 93.

Filipinos along with other ethnic groups were recruited to work in the canneries of Alaska. Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony points out “cannery owners found these people of color communities a cheap and exploitable workforce.”<sup>24</sup> In both situations Filipinos were sought after because of their growing numbers and transitory position in American society. Their status as the newest group of immigrants to the United States meant that Filipinos did not have well established communities, nor did they have the capital to form their own businesses. As a result, Filipino men were contracted by eager business owners to work in their fields and canneries seasonally, and the *manongs* began to move up and down the west coast looking for work.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, situations were arising in which looking elsewhere for work seemed like a good idea. The mix of no limit admission to the United States, the multitude of seasonal jobs, and prior American education in the Philippines meant that Filipinos saw immigration to the United States as a quick and ideal solution for their economic troubles. They left the Philippines with high expectations, as Fujita-Rony states, “As the amount of land available for agricultural workers in the Philippines shrank, people went abroad to improve their opportunities, thinking that they might be able to return with capital to the home village.”<sup>25</sup> Brett H. Melendy supports this point by stating, “The significant point is that Filipinos thought they would reside in California for but a short time, and made not serious effort at assimilation.”<sup>26</sup> These labor immigrants were most often single men who were willing to work the seasonal agricultural jobs in

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<sup>24</sup> Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1914-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 98.

<sup>25</sup> Fujita-Rony, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Brett H. Melendy, “California’s Discrimination Against Filipinos, 1927-1935,” Roger Daniels and Spencer Olin, Jr., *Racism in California: A Reader in the History of Oppression*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972) 143.

Hawaii and California, or the cannery jobs in Seattle and Alaska. Though cheap by American standards, these jobs offered salaries that were better than most laborers could find in the Philippines. Therefore, either before, to pay for their boat passage, or upon arrival to the United States Filipinos made their way places like Stockton in California or King Street in Seattle, where with little money left in their pockets they became contract laborers sent out to the fields of California or becoming *Alaskeros* in the canneries of Alaska.

In addition to the promise of a good wage, working for a short while in the United States seemed ideal for other reasons as well. *Manongs'* expectations convinced them there was little need and little opportunity to settle in one location. Laborers could go where the work took them. And when they did settle it was just as easy to live in Asian ghettos already established Chinese, Koreans and Japanese, for as James A. Tyner claims, "As most Filipino immigrants are relatively fluent in English, there has not been a need to spatially cluster as a form of social cohesion."<sup>27</sup> And though he was using this statement to get Filipinos excluded from the United States, Paul Scharrenberg's declaration, "Practically no Filipino women come into this country, and as a result there is not real home or social life for them anywhere"<sup>28</sup> was quite true. As a result, *manongs* were free to pick up and leave at a moment's notice. Their families were back in the Philippines, waiting for money and hoping that this attempt in the United States would produce "economic success and class mobility."<sup>29</sup> Fujita-Rony states, "'Home' for this largely migratory population thus seems not so much ties to a particular location as to a group of

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<sup>27</sup> Tyner, 264.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Scharrenberg, "The Philippine Problem: Attitude of American Labor Toward Filipino Immigration and Philippine Independence," in *Pacific Affairs* 2 (February 1929): 51.

<sup>29</sup> Fujita-Rony 49.



people.”<sup>30</sup> Lack of family meant lack of settlement, which contributed to the lack of permanency among *manongs*. The second wave of Filipinos was creating a transplantable community. The roots of these workers were not deeply planted in one location, but were shallow and found footholds in many locations. In each location they were not influencing the culture around them, but being influenced by it, becoming more Americanized. This is where the study of Carlos Bulosan’s work comes in handy, for it gives a firsthand account of the grueling life of an immigrant laborer and demonstrates the effects that American culture had on the *manongs*.

### **Carlos Bulosan**

Today every city along the west coast that hosted Filipino laborers from this time enjoys claiming some relationship with Carlos Bulosan. The reality is that they are all in some ways true. Bulosan, and others like him, spent a great deal of time in these cities. The study of Filipinos in Seattle is not a study of stationary characters. As explained the *manongs* were a migrant group going back and forth up and down the coast wherever work would take them. Scholars study individuals who spent time in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, and Montana. Cities such as Kinikea, Seattle, Yakima Valley, San Francisco, Stockton, Sacramento, San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Sante Fe were all common gathering places for Filipinos. In each location Filipinos gathered in large numbers but not in specifically set aside spaces for Filipinos.

Bulosan arrived in the United States on July 22, 1930 in Seattle, Washington at the age of seventeen. Prior to his arrival, Bulosan had spent his early childhood working

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<sup>30</sup> Fujita-Rony, 98.

in the family farm fields, helping his mother at the market, and working in the resort towns in the Northern part of the Philippines. His decision to move to the United States was spurred on by the examples of his brothers, who had left before him. More importantly Bulosan felt too disheartened with the hardships experienced by his family and wished to try his luck elsewhere. In his attempt to reason with his mother over his decision, Bulosan explains his feelings in this way, “She did not know that doing the work of a full grown man had matured me beyond my age, that I had outgrown my narrow environment.”<sup>31</sup> Western influence and increasing industrialization in the Philippines suggested to Bulosan that going to the United States would provide him with a larger environment and a chance to earn enough to help his family’s situation in the Philippines. He had the desire to go make a success out of him, and if he did not return physically then at least he might return monetarily.

Like so many others, Bulosan was coerced into work and out of money by white businessmen, Chinese and Japanese overseers, and even old timer Filipinos. It was the way that everyone seemingly survived. Bulosan’s account suggests through numerous examples that exploitation, coercion, and inflation were the tools to use if one wanted to get ahead, or even to get a job. Straight off the ship, Bulosan states that he headed to King Street, the center of Filipino life in Seattle, took a hotel room, but could not pay for it and as a result was pressed into a contract for the fish canneries in Alaska. Of this experience Bulosan writes,

“In this way we were sold for five dollars each to work in the fish canneries in Alaska, by a Visayan from the island of Leyte to an Ilocano from the province of La Union. Both were old timers; both were tough.

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<sup>31</sup> Bulosan, 64.

They exploited young immigrants until one of them, the hotel proprietor, was shot dead by an unknown assailant.”<sup>32</sup>

The result was that right from the start Bulosan experienced and was exposed to the hardships and violence of living in the United States as a Filipino immigrant. His life in the fish canneries and later up and down the west coast as a farm laborer showed that there needed to be a certain level of distrust of every person that one might encounter. A friend, a leader of a labor crew, a boss, a woman, a stranger could all be advantageous to know in order to get a job. However, in the same breath they could also be the means by which a *manong* lost all their money.

Despite the wariness one needed amongst fellow *manongs*, there were greater enemies than one another. Bulosan states, “So however much we distrusted each other under Paez [the leader of his labor crew], we knew that beyond the walls of our bunkhouse were our real enemies, waiting to drive us out of Yakima Valley.”<sup>33</sup> The white business and farm owners and the white townspeople were just one larger group of people that throughout his work Bulosan demonstrates could turn against the *manongs* quite easily. One day the Filipinos’ labor would be essential to the town’s production and the next day the *manongs* were being run out of town. A lot of these actions had to do with racism, but sometimes the laborers were not entirely blameless either. Another enemy outside the bunkhouses was the owners of dance and gambling halls in the cities and farm towns. King Street, Stockton, Los Angeles and the other major gathering points of *manongs* were flooded with workers at the end of a season, single, flush with money and looking for a good time. Bulosan writes, “The asparagus season was over and most

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<sup>32</sup> Bulosan, 101.

<sup>33</sup> Bulosan, 107.

of the Filipino farm hands were in town [Stockton], bent on spending their earning because they had no other place to go.”<sup>34</sup> In such places, Bulosan appeared to show surprising resistance to the attractions of women and gambling and an awareness of the cons going around him set up by the establishment. In the case of the dance hall he writes, “The girl was supposed to tear off one ticket every three minutes, but I noticed that she tore off a ticket for every minute. That was ten cents a minute.”<sup>35</sup> Awareness of these efforts kept Bulosan slightly better off than some of his fellow laborers, because despite awareness, he was not always able to avoid the complications that a pretty woman or a good drink could bring with them.

With no established homes in the United States, and no families other than possible siblings or friends who became like siblings the *manongs* as Bulosan states had nowhere to go with the money and time after the work was over. They were easy targets for the gambling dens and dance halls because their shallow roots meant as soon as the *manongs* lost everything they could pick up and move on to the next job site. In considering his possessions, Bulosan claims, “I was surprised to know that after eight years in the United States I had only one old blue suit, a cheap suitcase, and three shirts.”<sup>36</sup> The *manongs*, as typified by Bulosan, were in for a hard life with little rewards than what they could carry with them in once cheap suitcase. Bulosan’s account reads like a list of one city after another going up and down the western coast of the United States. He was always on the move unless he was laid up in the hospital or working. In the end, Bulosan lived out his days, joined in the union effort and writing, in Seattle with the help of friends. He never became a wealthy man, although he did achieve recognition

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<sup>34</sup> Bulosan, 116.

<sup>35</sup> Bulosan, 105.

<sup>36</sup> Bulosan, 257.

and success for his various literary endeavors. His perpetual bad health led to his death in 1956 at the age of forty three in Seattle.

The significance of the account of Bulosan's life is that as the hero of the second wave of Filipino labor immigrants Bulosan, his life and his person, is the epitome and idealized characterization of the *manongs*. In *America is in the Heart* he seemingly experiences it all: from the struggling life in the Philippines, to the hope of a better life in the United States, to experiencing the realities and hardships as a farm laborer and cannery worker. His back and forth relationships with his brothers, his attraction to and reception of white women, the danger of coercion, and the health issues are all common hardships that Filipino labor immigrants faced. Bulosan's life and later his work as an author gave voice to a generation of laborers who otherwise would have been fairly silent for a number of years.

An analysis of their account demonstrates the high expectations of Filipinos arriving in the United States. Bulosan's enemies, other minority groups and white Americans, show what was previously asserted. Other marginalized groups were in competition with *manongs*, while whites were interested in Filipino labor, not in developing relationships with Filipinos as they had back in the Philippines. Additionally, white racism and miscegenation played into this distrust of individuals like Bulosan. Bulosan was suave, well liked by women and a threat to white masculinity. This prevented connections between single men, like Bulosan, and white women. This prevention also stopped *manongs* from settlement in one location to start a family and wait out the off season. Instead manongs were pushed out of town once they had been fleeced of their money, and sent off to other locations, jobs and pursuits.

The result is the creation of individuals with disappointed expectations, but still hopeful for a big break. They move from one place to another never establishing their own communities, but living in the ethnic ghettos established by previous Asian immigrants. The consequence of this single itinerant life is that *manongs* continues to move up and down the West Coast, until the late 1930s into the 1940s at which point they were late in establishing communities of which few subsequent waves of Filipinos joined.

### **Filipinos in Seattle and Attempts at Assimilation**

What is experienced by Bulosan is only a part of the story however. There are numerous individuals who lived and worked and experienced the same things as Bulosan, but rarely, if ever, got to tell their stories. In the 1970s and 1980s, as the *manongs* began dying away, the Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHHS) set out to obtain these stories from the *manongs*. The result is a collection of oral histories that are plentiful and descriptive. Three such individuals are Sinforoso L. Ordon, Juan V. Mina, and Zacarias M. Managan. Their histories demonstrate the multitude of differences and similarities in the experiences of the *manongs*. They also demonstrate the different outcomes of their time spent in the United States; showing that while some never acclimated and became successful, others reached a measure of success and happiness beyond the world of farm labor and cannery work. However, the success of the few does not translate to the success for the majority, and it is the majority which Bulosan's life and account typifies.

Sinforoso L. Ordonas like so many others came to the United States to work and earn money that would be sent back to the Philippines.<sup>37</sup> His arrival in the United States between 1921 and 1928 was followed by work first as a houseboy in Seattle, and later the saw mills of Aberdeen, Montesano, and Port Angeles, a brief return to the Philippines, and finally work in the canneries of Alaska. This movement between jobs and locations but centered on the more central location of the Pacific Northwest demonstrates the migratory tendencies of the *manongs*. But it also proves the point that sometimes, laborers stayed in more localized areas of the United States, allowing people to lay claim to a specific location. Ordonas states that \$25 per month wage as a houseboy to a naval family was a good deal during the Depression. He was given a place to stay and sleep and days off. Additionally, he was making more money than farm workers who earned fifty cents an hour, and some other houseboys some of which “were working for ten, fifteen dollars a month.”<sup>38</sup> Moving onto the saw mills and box factories seemed like a good idea when an individual was given \$4 per day. At the saw mills the *manongs* were working ten hour days and living in bunkhouses, surrounded by other Filipinos. Ordonas states, “Well one time we are at Montesano, one saw mill was manned by all Filipinos at that saw mill. Just a few American, see. Just only a foreman and superintendant.”<sup>39</sup> This experience seems to be more fulfilling for Ordonas, because he was surrounded by others like him at a time when he was all alone. However, Ordonas fell into the trap of so many other Filipino laborers, losing his money to the gambling halls. On days or weekends off Ordonas states they would drive down to Seattle on Friday, stay in a hotel and go back Sunday. When asked what they would do in Seattle, Ordonas responded, “Oh gambling!

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<sup>37</sup> Sinforoso L. Ordonas, interviewed by Dorothy L. Cordova, September 5, 1981.

<sup>38</sup> Ordonas, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ordonas, 4.

Gambling, for others dance, taxi dance...Sometime I lose what I get in the saw mill. I get about \$80 out of the sawmill. When I come here [Seattle] I lose everything.”<sup>40</sup> And later the following conversation on wages and free time occurred:

“Q: So when you were earning \$4 per day, that was good, that was really good.

A: But I gamble. (laughs)

Q: If you didn’t gamble you would have been a rich man?

A:... Yeah, I gamble, sometimes, what I get my pay here today, tomorrow I’m broke.

Q: You sent money home to your parents?

A: Yeah.

Q: You would only gamble after you sent the money home?

A: Well yeah...”<sup>41</sup>

This conversation shows what was important to these Filipino laborers. They were in the United States to make money which they would send home to family members. But they were also interested in having a good time when they were given the opportunity. This resulted in nights out on the town, where a month’s wages was gambled or danced away as the *manongs* looked for companionship. However, this rarely occurred before some of that money was sent home for family members. While the interview does not continue much farther the impression is that Ordoná continued working the canneries and saw mills in the United States.

While Ordoná demonstrates the hardships with little rewards, Juan V. Mina is an example of a Filipinos who experienced the hardships, faced realities, but then turned

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<sup>40</sup> Ordoná, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Ordoná, 10.



those around to create a stable life for himself in the United States.<sup>42</sup> Mina arrived in California in 1933 and for the next eight years became like so many other Filipino immigrants. In 1941, he joined his uncle in Washington and began to turn his past experiences and the wartime situation to his advantage. In response to why he came to the United States, Mina states, “Well, I, the reason why I decided to come to the United States is go research a better living and I did. [...] all I have is my health. And my intention is willing to use my health of any kind of work that I could find.”<sup>43</sup> His goal was to come to the United States, find a job, get a better life and send some money home. He used his good health throughout California to get jobs on farms and worked as a field laborer. In 1933, he received 20 cents per hour as farm wage, and during World War II that wage went up to 35 cents per hour. His indifference for the cabarets and dance halls, and interest in the movies and hanging around town meant that Mina was in a better financial situation than others like him who got sucked into the world of gambling. The time spent in the United States, and the lack of any substantial financial progress prevented Mina from returning to the Philippines when given a chance. Later, Mina claims that the events of WWII were discouraging to any hope of returning. He claims,

“So after the fall of Bataan, we never heard anything from the Philippines for three years. So most of us were thinking that the Philippines was gone, we will never see it again. That was our assumption. So we, Filipinos that was not in service, that didn’t go to the army, we were here as civilians, farming or working in defense factory, though what is the use we can’t go back to the Philippines anymore.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Juan V. Mina, interviewed by Carolina Apostol, May 30, 1976.

<sup>43</sup> Mina, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Mina, 10.

These feelings prompted Mina to attempt to assimilate more into the American culture. He obtained United States citizenship, started flirting with white women and even married one in 1944. In 1941, he joined his uncle and rented 60 acres of land in Washington, and by 1976 owned 10 acres and was renting 300 acres more. Mina's life in California was hard, but he was given a set of circumstances in Washington that provided a means of becoming that model immigrant white America was looking for. However, this acceptance by Mina and others like him facilitated an end to the creation any Filipino ethnic group identity. It prevented Filipinos from establishing anything more than shallow roots as a group and promoted the creation of deep roots individually. It is also important to note that Mina only began actively looking for a wife after he had no hope of returning to the Philippines. Additionally, he is assimilating and coming more Americanized, not helping establish a Filipino culture and visible ethnic identity in a community.

Like Mina, Zacarias M. Managan avoided the gambling halls and more expensive recreation and as a result was able to establish himself fairly securely in the United States, without ever becoming a U. S. citizen.<sup>45</sup> Managan's experience is different from the others because he was married at eighteen in the Philippines before he came to the United States. As a result, his experiences in the United States kept him from his wife and family for ten years, as he searched around for a way to support his family. After his arrival in March 1929, he was quarantined because of meningitis through April, and was able to get to Montana for work by May. His experiences led him to become a railroad worker for the Japanese for six months. Travels through Washington and down to California set up Managan as an itinerant farm worker. By 1935, however, he was back

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<sup>45</sup> Zacarias M. Managan, interviewed by Carolina D. Koslosky, September 30, 1975.

in Seattle about to depart for Alaska canneries under the contract system. Of the system Managan had this to say,

“Well in those days, they...If you have a friend that belongs to the cannery or something or that has worked in the cannery then they supply the info. And when the season comes why all you have to do is go down to the hall, they used to have a hiring office over at King Street.”<sup>46</sup>

The obvious result is that Filipino workers could show up at the King Street hiring office, quickly get a job and be sent on their way to Alaska for the season. While he worked under this contract system, Managan also joined up with the emerging Filipino Workers Unions around Seattle to achieve better wages and better conditions. Eventually the married, union man was able to have his wife join him in the United States. Life during the war for Managan meant work in the Bremerton yards to repair the bombed ships from Pearl Harbor, and union work protected his interests in the future. Managan seems to have planted some deep roots in the Seattle area, and yet his presence and others like him did not facilitate a lasting presence in the public eye beyond the war years. It could be argued that this is partially due to the fact he went ten years with his wife or family around him in the United States. This lack of family in his early years made him much like other single manongs in the United States.

The experiences of these three men show the wide range of opportunities that Filipino labor immigrants partook. However, while the variety might have been nice their experiences demonstrate that life for the Filipino labor immigrant was lonely, rife with pitfalls and scams, and only paid well if one got lucky. Sinforoso Odorna fell into the economic traps that Filipino laborers encountered. Juan Mina was able to create a

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<sup>46</sup> Managan, 20.

good life, but away from the larger Filipino community in Seattle. Zacarias Managan was probably the most successful with his experience in the labor unions, but this does not necessarily translate to a great show of Filipino identity from him and his companions. Despite the different outcomes of these three men's experiences in the United States, all of their stories include long periods of movement, isolation, and individual decision making that characterize the Filipino labor immigrant's life in the United States. This is in part because none were actively seeking out a wife, companionship or family for more than one night until the 1940s and the advent of events during World War II. By the end of World War II, the second waves' window of opportunity to create deep rooted communities to influence American culture had passed. The opportunity instead was moved onto the third wave of immigrants. Additionally those that attempted to fit in like Mina and Managan did so to meet American standards.

### **Responses to Filipinos and Shifting Allegiances**

As has been seen, Filipinos attempted to fit into the American lifestyle. They expected to be welcomed into the American community and treated as they had been back in the Philippines, almost as brothers. This optimism was unfounded and even worked against the Filipinos. In her introduction to *America is in the Heart*, Carey McWilliams claims, "It was their eager initially reaching out for acceptance that seemed to stimulate the reaction against them. They took too much for granted."<sup>47</sup> This eagerness mixed with the realities of itinerant lifestyles made it obvious that white responses to the *manongs* would not be pleasant. McWilliams further states, "Numerically they were not a threat nor did they present an economic threat real or

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<sup>47</sup> McWilliams, xiii.

imagined; they lacked the business sense of the Chinese and the agricultural and other skills of the Japanese.”<sup>48</sup> Despite this, the work was hard, the wages poor and like their Chinese and Japanese counterparts, Filipino laborers soon met with opposition from all sides.

By the 1930s, the Filipinos’ largest source of opposition was the white Americans who had initially welcomed them into the country. What made it so easy for Filipinos to enter the United States did them the most harm when white alliances turned against them. The advent of the Depression and their status as single men incited white American’s ire against the Filipinos who had little means of protection since they had no outside government to protect their interests.

These white Americans were worried on two counts. First, “the 1930 census reported approximately 45,000 Filipinos were residing on the mainland, with over 63,000 Filipinos in Hawaii.”<sup>49</sup> These large numbers of Filipinos were staggering to Americans, because all other Asian immigrant groups had been restricted. Concern grew that Filipino immigrants as a source of cheap labor were more desirable than white laborers who were beginning to suffer from the effects of a nationwide Depression. White America’s second source of worry was that Filipino immigrants were too American. As Ngai states, “Filipinos could not be considered heathen or steeped in ancient traditionalism: they were Christians; they went to American schools and spoke English; they wore Western-style clothes; they were familiar with American popular culture.”<sup>50</sup> Part of this excess Americanization, was an affinity among Filipinos to spend time with white American women. At the dance halls, looking for female companionship, Filipinos

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<sup>48</sup> McWilliams, xii.

<sup>49</sup> Tyner, 254.

<sup>50</sup> Ngai, 109.

paid 10 cents for tickets that gave them a minute to dance with a young white girl. Thus the phrase “A Dollar a Day, Ten Cents a Dance” became popular to describe the plight of Filipino laborers who could lose their whole wages in one night of dancing. The concept even became a popular song, “Ten Cents a Dance,” in which the refrain exclaims,

“Sometime I think I’ve found my hero  
But it’s a queer romance  
All that you need is a ticket;  
Come on big boy, ten cents a dance.”<sup>51</sup>

This phrase clearly demonstrates the strange relationships going on between male Filipino laborers and white American women. Looking for companionship, Filipinos would go to dance halls and maybe meet up with their favorite girl, but in the process they were not creating real relationships because they were paying “ten cents a dance.” Any feeling that might emerge was offset by the fact that this is paid companionship. Additionally, as demonstrated by Mina’s assertion, when *manongs* felt they could still return to the Philippines they did not look for lasting, long term involvement with the white American women they were spending time with.

Thus worried about jobs, money, and their women white America pushed for the change Filipinos status from nationals to aliens, and later for the independence of the Philippines. A growing anti-Filipino movement was starting to emerge in the United States. The severity of these sentiments ranged across the nation, like many controversial issues often do. Additionally, poor sentiments against the Filipino laborers living and working in the United States translated to anti-Philippines and anti-Colonization sentiments. Problems with Filipinos at home translated to problems with Filipinos

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<sup>51</sup> Lorenz Hart and Richard Rodgers. “Ten Cents a Dance.” in *100 Best Songs of 20’s and 30’s*. introduction by Richard Rodgers. (New York: Bonanza Books, 1973) 238.

abroad. There were some who called for the immediate withdrawal from the Philippines, while others advocated a slower retreat. Throughout the 1930s the publication *Pacific Affairs* covered this topic. Most of its contributors were in favor of the United States' removal from the Philippines; the method, however, often came up for debate. Many individuals were largely in favor of an immediate removal from the Philippines. This support is demonstrated by both anti-imperialists and pleas by Filipinos who claimed that the Philippines had been taught everything necessary to have a democracy, and that it was time to let the Filipinos try for themselves. Others realized that it was probably time to remove from the Philippines, but recognized that the United States had a continual moral obligation to the Philippines which prevented them from immediate removal. These individuals felt that the United States still had not completed its commitment to bettering the Philippine's education and medical systems.

To better understand the seriousness of these sentiments a Research Committee of the American Council sent out Bruno Lasker to conduct a survey on the "Philippine Situation." After spending five months traveling the country his results, published in *Filipino Immigration: to Continental United States and to Hawaii*, demonstrate the conflicting perceptions and reactions to the Filipinos. Lasker found that while there was no real competition between Filipino laborers and white laborers, racism was negatively impacting various areas of life and creating real problems in the United States. He claimed that "For over ninety percent of the population, a 'Filipino Problem' exists only through hearsay."<sup>52</sup> In addition to this Lasker found that "the tendency of Filipino wage earners to undercut American wage standards and to create unemployment is real but

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<sup>52</sup> Lasker, 3.

limited.”<sup>53</sup> These statements suggest that while the problem between Filipino and white laborers was about employment and economics, the bigger force was issues of race. White Americans just could not get beyond the color of Filipinos’ skin and their worry over racial purity. Lasker describes Filipino men as “neat and clean, with a leaning toward good if occasionally to showy clothes, musical, considerate, eager to please, food dancers...many of them good looking. They were romantic and cheerful...Girls like them. Mature women liked them. Everybody liked them.”<sup>54</sup> He goes on to say, “If the Filipino is charged with being too aggressive in the pursuit of American women, it is generally conceded that, on the whole, he has met with success.”<sup>55</sup> This was the real threat of Filipino laborers. They were too attractive to white women, when the laborers flirted and spent time with these women it was often in an official capacity of a date, and white men had no legitimate reasons for disliking them other than the color of their skin.

Lasker additionally offered up the opinion that the tension between the Filipinos and white America not a new phenomena. Instead it was part of a pattern that every emerging immigrant group went through. Lasker claimed that normally, in this pattern, there are four stages of reaction to a new immigration movement. They include (1) growing awareness to disharmony and conflicts of interest, (2) action, (3) organization, (4) stabilization in relations. Lasker claimed that Filipino immigrants had not yet reached the fourth stage.<sup>56</sup> If Lasker’s theory is correct then had the United States just waited a while longer, and did not focus on the issues and disturbances occurring, they would have found that Filipinos and Americans would eventually peacefully reside side by side.

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<sup>53</sup> Lasker, 64.

<sup>54</sup> Lasker, 93.

<sup>55</sup> Lasker, 92.

<sup>56</sup> Lasker, 326-327.



However, the United States did not wait. Instead when the relations between the two groups stabilized it happened with the third wave, not the second.

Lasker's final observation was that "for the time being the campaign for exclusion has helped to spread and intensify an antagonism toward Filipino immigrants which otherwise would have remained more largely latent."<sup>57</sup> Had the Filipino laborers been left alone, they may have eventually begun to settle down in one location, had an increase in the number of women immigrating to the United States, and have families finally forming permanent communities. These communities could have assimilated into and influenced American culture and society. Instead, white laborers' worries were compounded with the onset of the Depression, and the antagonism between a new immigrant group and the established ethnic majority was increased. Again, when this process eventually happened the *manongs* only created small, dependent communities which did not rely on their own small businesses. Instead the *manongs* relied on the businesses of other ethnic groups. Meanwhile the third wave had spread out across the United States, moved into suburbs, and became the Americanized model immigrant.

Bruno Lasker's observations demonstrate that the Filipinos did not have deep roots in American culture. His final observation advocates the allowance of Filipinos who remain in the United States to establish these deep roots, but only to the advancement of Filipino assimilation and the creation of the model immigrant. Lasker was not advocating the creation of deep ethnic roots in the United States among the Filipinos. And while some Filipino immigrants seem to be settling in more permanent locations by 1940 they were not establishing large, independent Filipino communities, they were establishing Filipino-American communities with an emphasis on the

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<sup>57</sup> Lasker, 342.

American. A large number of *manongs* were still migratory and subject to the whims of white America and other ethnic groups.

Beyond the white racism they encountered Filipinos were also exploited by other ethnic groups. The Asian groups that white Americans had tried so hard to exclude had worked hard to move beyond unskilled labor work, and they became business owners and entrepreneurs. The Japanese owned many of the businesses and farms where Filipinos tried to find work. Meanwhile, the Chinese were often in possession of the gambling houses, brothels and dancing halls where the Filipinos fresh from their time in fields and canneries in Alaska lost their already small monthly wages. McWilliams states, “Estimates have been made that as much as two million dollars a year was skimmed off the earnings of Filipinos and other field workers in Stockton in the way of services, gambling, prostitution and the like.”<sup>58</sup> Both the Chinese and the Japanese were being good businessmen in a capitalist society. This practice, however, did not in any way suit the money management skill of the Filipino men. The result was that owners got richer while laborers got poorer.

These situations make it obvious that with white Americans, Chinese, and Japanese all working against them, mixed with their own growing feelings of isolation and hopelessness, that Filipinos did not have the experience that they hope for in America. Shifting tides of perception and acceptance throughout the 1930s make life for the Filipino laborer even harder. By 1934, the Filipinos were no longer considered U.S. nationals, and with the Tydings-McDuffie Act the Philippine Islands were well on their way to becoming independent, although they did not achieve that status until after WWII in 1946.

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<sup>58</sup> McWilliams, xi.

**Filipinos Past 1946 and Conclusion**

As a trade off for their labor, immigrants have often gained a foothold in American society that has translated to permanent presence and deep roots in the United States and its culture. African Americans, Germans, Irish, Italians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and Hispanics have all gone through or started this process of assimilation and influence. They have effectively become a part of the American identity. This process, however, has not been the case for Filipino Americans. Their laboring group only had shallow roots that were easily disrupted and transplanted around the American west from 1920-1940 thus their presence on society and culture today is limited.

As seen United States imperialism set the Filipinos up for this life when white America promised them a good life for a fair wage. Filipinos came to the United States hopeful and optimistic. The optimism was cruelly rewarded. Those promised jobs were in the farm fields up and down the west coast of the United States or in the canneries in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Neither of these job markets provided stable, long term employment so the Filipino laborers were required to perpetually move around the United States in search of work. As a result, Filipino immigrants during the second wave of immigration predominately consisted of young males and few females. These young men participated in a migratory existence that did not lend itself to establishing lasting relationships, expect with one another. When the Filipinos attempted to fit into society some like Carlos Bulson, Juan Mina, and Zacarias Managan were fairly successful in the long run. While more often Filipinos, like Sinforosa Ordona, in places such as dance halls, gambling houses, and in communities were ripped off by the establishment and seen as a threat by the white Americans also participating in these enjoyments.

Additionally, despite their disappointment many were hopeful that they might return to the Philippines. Only when that dream died did the *manongs* look for wives and families. By this point it was already the 1940s and the United States was dealing with the war. By 1935, white America was ready to be done with the Philippines and its people. This meant a movement toward Philippine independence and expulsion of the Filipinos in the United States. White America's efforts, however, were only limitedly successful. By the 1940s, though, the United States' attention was focused more on the events occurring around the world because of World War II than on their personal international problems and concerns.

The Filipinos in the United States were also interested in the events of WWII, and when the Japanese invaded and occupied the Philippines many felt a sense of loss and resignation that they would have to stay in the United States. As a result, out of the public eye of white America, the second wave of Filipinos continued on as they always had. A few participated in the war bride craze, and a few had gotten married in the 1920s and 1930s and now had children, but even more continued on as itinerant farm laborers living in cheap hotels.

During the 1940s and 1950s, in addition to the third wave of Filipino immigrants coming to the United States, there was also a small group which Peter Jamero identifies as the Bridge Generation. Coined and adopted at the 1994 FANHS National Conference, the Bridge Generation as defined by Peter Jamero are "children born in America by the end of 1945 to at least one Filipino parent who immigrated to the United States from 1920-1940."<sup>59</sup> Like the third wave immigrants coming to the United States, this Bridge

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<sup>59</sup> Peter Jamero, "Vanishing Filipino Americans" presentation at FANHS Bi-annual National Conference, July 23, 2010.

Generation seems to have solidified Filipino immigrant's place as model immigrants to the rest of American society. They are part of the small communities set up by the *manongs* after 1935, but the activities which many participated in were highly Americanized, such as high school clubs, sports teams and tournaments in basketball, etc. Jamero calls on more research to be done on this generation, but he describes them as a group of mestiza individuals who participated in American culture, while being raised as Filipinos. They were involved in a Youth Club Movement, received good educations, and were gainfully employed in white collar jobs. While some might return to the seasonal jobs, such as farm laboring and cannery work, which characterized the second waves' existence in the United States, this Bridge Generation only did so as a summer job between school terms to earn money to pay for their schooling. As a result, some Filipinos were settling down, but they were doing so as assimilated and Americanized people. These deep roots were characterized in an American ethnic identity, not a Filipino ethnic identity.

The remaining unmarried second wave of immigrant men continued on as they always had. They worked the fields and in the canneries seasonally going from one region in the West Coast to another. They continued to be migrants who only planted shallow roots. Their efforts at unionizing were fairly successful, but their protest movements, such as the Delano Grape Strike in 1965, were taken over by Cesar Chavez and the Mexican workers and Filipino involvement was soon forgotten. The result was a group of labor immigrants who had no real voice in the world of politics to create an identity and protect their interests.

Their lack of large established communities, independent from other Asian groups' communities and ethnic centers, with families, housing, and businesses meant that the labor groups of Filipino immigrants, this second wave of Filipinos, did not establish deep ethnic roots by which later generations and waves of immigrants would follow and grow. Instead of influencing American culture to adopt some Filipino custom or culture, the many waves of Filipinos were influenced to adopt an American culture. As a result, while there may be over one million Filipinos living in the United States today their presence and influence on American culture has been largely ignored and does not manifest itself in any highly noticeable physical means.

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